DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 566 48 FL 002 580

AUTHOR Ferguson, Charles A.
TITLE The Ethiopean Language Area.
INSTITUTION Stanford Univ., Calif.
SPONS AGENCY Institute of International Studies (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Jul 71
CONTRACT OEC-0-71-1018(823)
NOTE 22p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Amharic; Consonants; *Descriptive Linguistics; *Distinctive Features; Geographic Distribution; *Grammar; *Language Classification; Language Patterns; Language Typology; Morphology (Languages); Phonemes; *Phonology; Pronunciation; Semitic Languages; Somali; Structural Analysis; Syntax; Tables (Data); Verbs; Vowels
IDENTIFIERS *Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

This paper constitutes the fifth chapter of the forthcoming volume "Language in Ethiopia." In an effort to better define the particular linguistic area, the author analyzes phonological and grammatical features that languages in the area have in common. A number of features have been identified as characteristic of the area, and this chapter discusses eight phonological and eighteen grammatical characteristics which constitute significant items within the languages under consideration. Tables illustrate the distribution of these features among the particular languages. A list of references is included. (VM)

Title VI, Sec. 602, NDEA
OE-IIS
FL

ED056566

THE ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGE AREA

Charles A. Ferguson

HEW Contract No. OEC-0-71-1018 (823)
Institute of International Studies
U.S. Office of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Stanford, California

July 1971

FL002 580

ED 2224

This study will constitute Chapter 5 of the volume, Language in Ethiopia, by M. L. Bender, J. D. Bowen, R. L. Cooper, C. A. Ferguson and others (Oxford University Press and Haile Sellassie I University Press, forthcoming). As such it is a publication resulting from the Language Survey of Ethiopia, which was part of the five-nation Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in Eastern Africa, supported by the Ford Foundation. The major part of the research was carried out as part of the Survey and a preliminary version of the study appeared in the Journal of Ethiopian Studies. A grant from the Institute of International Studies of the Office of Education, HEW Contract No. OEC-0-71-1018 (823) made it possible to complete the research and issue the study in this form.

Chapter 5

THE ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGE AREA [1]

One of the primary tasks of linguists is to write grammars of individual languages, i.e. to show in detail how a particular language on the one hand shares the characteristics of all human languages as well as some of those of various other languages, and on the other hand has characteristics which make it different from all other languages. Since writing a truly complete grammar and dictionary of a language is obviously impossible, linguists attempt instead to describe what they regard as the most important characteristics of the language. Two principles seem to be the basis of their estimation of importance: how generally a feature functions throughout the language and how distinctive the feature is for the language, i.e. how much it differentiates the language from others.

In attempting to describe the total language situation of a nation, one of the major tasks is likewise the characterization of its major languages and languages representative of the variety of linguistic structures in the country. Here we have chosen to provide a set of sketches which will give the reader an insight into the structures of the languages. We have selected major and representative languages, and we limit ourselves to what seem to be the most interesting features of the languages for our purpose. In general, the same principles underlie the presentation -- generality within a language and distinctiveness in comparison with other languages. In addition, we will pay attention to some features shared by the Ethiopian languages as opposed to languages outside Ethiopia even though several of the features may be relatively insignificant by the other two principles.

The languages of Ethiopia constitute a linguistic area in the sense that they tend to share a number of features which, taken together, distinguish them from any other geographically defined group of languages in the world. Some of these shared features are due to genetic relationship, that is they continue features present in a remote ancestral language, while others result from the processes of reciprocal diffusion among languages which have been in contact for many centuries. Not every language in Ethiopia has all these features, and a few languages do not fit into the pattern at all, but in general most of the languages in an area roughly coincident with Ethiopia's boundaries have features of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and patterns of expression which are, taken together, distinctive and characteristic of the area.

In this way Ethiopia constitutes a language area in much the same way that the Balkans, the Caucasus, or South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Ceylon) is an area. For example, most of the languages of South Asia share these features of pronunciation: they have retroflex consonants, nasal vowels, and aspirated stops, they have few spirants, and they lack word accent. Only a few marginal languages in South Asia do not fit this picture,

FL002 580

and no other area in the world has just this combination of features (Emeneau 1956, 1965; Ramanujan and Masica, 1969). After first setting a general framework by listing some of the general marks of the whole Ethiopian area, we then sketch some of the salient characteristics of eight languages within it (Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10, 11).

About a score of features have been identified as characteristic of the area, and fifteen of the most important languages of Ethiopia will be examined for the presence or absence of each feature. To make the presentation simple, actual examples will be taken from Amharic whenever possible.[2] Twelve languages were selected, each of which is the mother tongue of over 100,000 Ethiopians. Four of these are Ethio-Semitic languages: Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, and Chaha (spoken by fewer than 100,000 but selected as an example of the remaining Ethio-Semitic languages, which may total nearly 700,000 speakers); five are Cushitic: Afar, Galla, Somali, Sidamo, and Hadiyya; two are Omotic: Welamo and Kefa; one is Nilo-Saharan: Anyuak. In addition to the twelve "mother-tongue" languages, three others have been included because of their special importance in the country: Geez, Arabic, and English.

Phonological Features

Eight features of pronunciation (P1 - P8) will be considered, including the presence of certain kinds of sounds, their relations to one another, and the role they play in grammatical processes.

P1. /f/ for /p/. Although there is a voiced labial stop /b/, the voiceless counterpart /p/ is rare or non-existent; there is, however, a voiceless labiodental fricative /f/, for which a voiced counterpart /v/ is rare or non-existent, although often the /b/ has a v-like fricative pronunciation in certain positions. In languages like this the /f/ and /b/ are counterparts, unlike other languages such as English which have /p/ and /b/ as counterparts and also have /fv/ as counterparts to each other.

full sets		"/f/ for /p/"	
p	b	-	b
f	v	f	-

Examples: Amharic has many words with /b/ and /f/, such as bet 'house', leba 'thief', gebba 'to enter', feres 'horse', af 'mouth', geffa 'to push'. The /b/ is pronounced as a stop when initial, geminate, or after a nasal; otherwise it tends to be pronounced as a fricative. The voiceless labial stops /p p'/ are very rare and taken together they are less than 1/20 of the frequency of /b/ and /f/. The sound /p'/ occurs chiefly in a few words borrowed from Greek centuries ago (e.g. terep'(p')eza 'table', ityop'(p')iya 'Ethiopia')[3] and /p/ occurs only in recent loanwords (e.g. polis 'police' and posta 'mail').

P2. Palatalization. There is a series of palatal consonants (/c j š c' ň/ is the most widespread pattern) which occur independently, that is they are lexically distinctive,[4] and there is a common grammatical process in at least one major word class, such as nouns or verbs, by which dental consonants are replaced by the corresponding palatal consonants;[5] often the palatal consonant is long (Palmer 1958). Example: Amharic has a set of palatal consonants /c j c' š ž ň/ as in acca 'peer', ajja, kind of grain, k'ac'c'a, kind of fiber, waššа 'cave', k'ažžɛ 'to have nightmares', daňňa 'a judge'. Palatalization occurs in verbs and verbal nouns; for example, when the final consonant of the verb stem is one of the dentals /t d t' s a s' n l/, it is palatalized to the corresponding /c j c' š ž c' ň y/ in the second person feminine singular of the gerund (being doubled in the latter).

kɨfɛt	'open (m.sg.)!'	kɨfɛc	'open (f.sg.)!'
wɨsɛd	'take (m.sg.)!'	wɨsɛj	'take (f.sg.)!'
kɛftɔ	'he having opened'	kɛfɨcce	'I having opened'
wɛsdɔ	'he having taken'	wɛsɨjje	'I having taken'

The palatal consonants in Amharic are less frequent in occurrence (by a ratio of about 1 to 6) than their corresponding dental consonants; the /ž/ is very rare and occurs almost exclusively as a grammatical palatalization of /z/ or as an alternate of /j/. Palatal consonants in Amharic are often neither clearly short nor clearly long. For most consonants in the language, length or gemination is distinctive (see P6 Gemination), but, as in many other languages in Ethiopia and elsewhere, gemination of palatal consonants in Amharic is fluctuating and ambiguous, so that clearcut contrasts are hard to find. Generally, palatals between vowels sound long and are so transcribed here.

P3. Glottalic consonants. There is a series of glottalic consonants ("ejectives", see Chapter 1) contrasting with non-glottalic consonants, typically with one glottalic consonant corresponding to a voiceless-voiced pair of non-glottalic consonants. (The commonest pattern is /(p') t' c' k' s'/ with /p'/ rare and /s'/ having a variant pronunciation as an affricate, i.e. a glottalic ts-sound.) Example: Amharic has a series of glottalic consonants /p' t' c' k' s'/ of which /p'/ is rare and /s'/ often has a ts-like affricate pronunciation and in some dialects falls together with the /t'/.[6] Sample words: p'ap'(p')as 'bishop', t'ɨl 'feud', c'ɛw 'salt', k'ɛbɛro 'jackal', s'afɛ 'to write'. Compare these to parlɛma 'Parliament', tɨl 'worm', cɛr 'kind', kɛbɛro 'drum', sɛfi 'tailor'. Although the glottalic consonants are one of the striking characteristics of the sound system, they are much less frequent (ratio about 1 to 4) than the corresponding non-glottalized consonants.

P4. Implosive /d'/. There is a voiced stop, contrasting with /d/, which is pronounced somewhat farther back (post-alveolar or retroflex), is often implosive, may have r-like flap pronunciation between vowels, and may

interchange with /r/ in some grammatical processes. (If the language has a series of glottalic consonants, this /d'/ may function as the voiced counterpart of /t'/.)[7] Example: Galla has /t t' d d'/ contrasting with one another, all four of relatively high frequency. Sample words: tokko 'one', t'inna 'small', demu 'to go', d'era 'long'.

P5. Pharyngal spirants. There is, in addition to /h/, a voiceless-voiced pair of spirants (fricatives) made by pharyngal constriction /ħ ʕ/; they are not marginal, being generally more frequent, more widely distributed and more stable than /h/. Example: Tigrinya has /ħ ʕ/ in addition to /h/; they occur in all positions and are of relatively high frequency. Sample words: ħawwi 'fire', werħi 'moon', newiħ 'long', ʕasa 'fish', bɛlʕe 'to eat', ʕayni 'eye'.

P6. Gemination. Length is lexically distinctive in consonants and there is a grammatical process in at least one major word class, such as nouns or verbs, in which a short ("single") consonant is replaced by a long ("double", "geminate") consonant (Palmer 1957). In some languages, such as English, geminate consonants occur only at grammatical boundaries, as in compound words like pen-knife (nn), book-keeper (kk), or at word boundaries such as seem more as against see more. Otherwise, the difference is not distinctive in such languages, although English spelling frequently uses double consonants to represent other differences in pronunciation (e.g. hoping : hopping, filer : filler) or even to distinguish words pronounced alike (e.g. Finnish : finish). Example: All the consonants of Amharic except /h/ occur both short and long, although the long consonants are less common than the short ones (ratio about 1 to 11). In many instances the occurrence of one or the other is unpredictable (e.g. wana 'swimming' : wanna 'principal', 'chief'), i.e. the difference is lexically distinctive. In most cases, however, long consonants are related to grammatical processes. Most often it is the second consonant of the root which is geminated, as in the regular past tense of most verbs (sɛbbɛrɛ 'he broke'), in the intensive (sɛbabbɛrɛ 'he smashed'), and in a kind of passive verbal noun (sɨbbari 'broken off piece').

P7. Central vowels. In addition to front unrounded vowels (e.g. /i e/), back rounded vowels (e.g. /u o/), and low central /a/, there are one or more non-low central vowels which tend to be shorter in duration than the other vowels, and to show greater variation in pronunciation depending on the surrounding sounds. Example: Amharic has, in addition to /i e o u a/, two central vowels /ɨ ɛ/ whose average lengths are much less than the average lengths of the other vowels; also their range of phonetic variation is greater -- they are, for example, higher near palatal consonants and rounded near labial consonants. The vowel /ɛ/ is by far the most frequent vowel in the language.

P8. Helping vowel. Clusters of three or more consonants do not exist, and whenever grammatical processes would lead to such a cluster, it is broken up by the automatic insertion of a vowel. (The vowel may be identified with one of the short vowels, usually a central vowel, or it may be outside the vowel system.) Many languages such as French or Armenian have a helping

vowel of this kind which is largely automatic in occurrence. Speakers of such languages who learn to speak a language which has larger consonant clusters (e.g. English or Russian) often unconsciously carry over their helping vowel into the new language. They insert extra vowels to break up consonant clusters; thus they might pronounce a phrase like first place (with a cluster -rstpl-) with an extra vowel: first ɨ pla e. Example: Amharic, apart from a few marginal cases involving semivowels, does not have three-consonant clusters. In instances where such a cluster would be expected /ɨ/ is inserted. For example, a word ending with a two-consonant cluster or a geminate consonant may be followed by a word beginning with a single consonant, and in such cases an automatic helping vowel (similar in quality to /ɨ/) is inserted between the words in ordinary conversation, e.g. sint 'how much' + new 'it is' sintɨnew 'how much is it?' Since the helping vowel is automatic in occurrence, Amharic speakers are often unaware of its presence and linguists generally disregard it in their transcriptions.[8]

The distribution of these phonological features among Ethiopian languages is shown in Table 1. It will be noted that the Ethio-Semitic and Cushitic mother tongues have five to seven of the eight features (shown by presence

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

of a '+' sign). Geez, which is also Ethio-Semitic although not a mother tongue, also belongs to this major group, while Arabic, also a Semitic language, has four of the characteristic features. Anyuak and English are clearly outside the area in terms of shared phonological features.

Grammatical Features

Eighteen grammatical features will be considered. Others equally characteristic might have been found, but in several instances, the evidence from particular languages was not reliable enough, or the feature itself was too difficult to define. The first eight grammatical features together characterize a certain syntactic type which is found in many parts of the world in genetically unrelated languages. Thus all eight of these features would be marked 'plus' not only for most Ethiopian languages but also for such languages as Turkish, Bengali and Japanese (Polotsky 1960, Greenberg 1963, Ferguson 1971).

In a language of this syntactic type (essentially the "rigid III" of Greenberg 1966) the verb comes at the end of the sentence and, in general, modifiers come before the item they modify (e.g. adjectives before nouns, subordinate clauses before main clauses). The language is predominantly suffixing, including a case system marked by suffixes and the use of postpositions rather than prepositions. The verbs enter into certain characteristic constructions: an inflected auxiliary comes after the main verb, there are "compound verbs" containing an auxiliary, and a less-inflected verb form in subordinate clauses is often equivalent to a main

verb connected with "and" in other languages. Comparisons are made in the form "Y-than X-strong is" rather than "X is stronger than-Y." Question words ('what', 'when', etc.) do not appear at the beginning of the sentence, and a general question particle comes at the very end of the sentence after the verb.

A number of Cushitic languages show many of these features and some of the languages probably fall quite clearly into this type. On the other hand, Geez and the Semitic languages outside Ethiopia do not show many of these features. Accordingly scholars have tended to assume that the presence of these features in varying degrees in modern Semitic languages is a result of Cushitic influence during the long centuries of interaction. It seems likely that this is the case, but this explanation raises in turn the question of how the Cushitic languages came to be of this type since they are also Afro-Asiatic. The question is left open here, since we are only trying to characterize the area as it now is without attempting to give a full historical explanation.

The remaining ten grammatical features, on the other hand, tend to reflect quite clearly a genetic relationship, and most of them can probably be assumed for proto-Afroasiatic; they thus represent chiefly grammatical features which the Semitic, Cushitic, and Omotic languages of Ethiopia have retained from a presumed ancestral language far removed in time from the present languages.

G1. SOV order. The normal word order of a declarative main clause which has nouns as subject and object is Subject + Object + Verb. In many languages, including some of the languages of Ethiopia, the order of words is fairly free, i.e. a sentence may be ordered in various ways with essentially the same meaning, except for variations in emphasis. What is meant by "normal word order" is the usual, ordinary order without any special emphasis. Example:

Amharic	wɛdɨmme	betun	gɛzza
	my-brother	the-hous-(obj.)	he-bought

My brother bought the house.

This Amharic sentence could be said in other ways (e.g. betun wendɨmme gɛzza) but the SOV order is the ordinary "normal" order, just as the normal order for English is SVO.

G2. Subordinate clauses precede. In sentences containing a subordinate clause such as one meaning 'when, after, since, although, in order to, if, until', the subordinate clause normally precedes the main clause. (Typically also there are severe limitations on the use of different verb tenses in the subordinate clause, so that the verb of the main clause gives the indication of the time for the whole sentence.) Often the fact of the subordinate clause preceding seems to be related to the more general tendency of the modifier

to precede the head, e.g. adjective before noun, relative clause before noun, adverb before verb, but in a number of Ethiopian languages this more general tendency is not fully carried out.

Example: Amharic

gazet'a	sɨttanɛbb	Kɛbbɛdɛ mɛt't'a
newspaper	while-you-read	Kebbede he-came

Kebbede came while you were reading a newspaper.

G3. Gerund. The language has a commonly used form of the verb which serves as the verb of a subordinate clause, with the meaning 'having done such-and-such', 'did such-and-such and', or 'by doing such-and-such'. In grammars of Ethiopian languages this verb form is most often called the "gerund". In Ethiopian languages it is often inflected for person and gender. Example: Amharic sɛbro 'he having broken', (sɛbra 'she having broken' sɛbɨrre 'I having broken'). Sample sentence:

wɛnzun	tɛšaggɨrre	wɛdɛ mɛnɛru	hedh^{w}
the-river-(obj.)	I-having crossed	to the-village	I-went

I crossed the river and went to the village.

G4. Postpositions. There are a number of common words or suffixes which follow immediately after nouns and have meanings such as 'in, on, outside, inside, near, before, after, with, without, between, until'. Example: Amharic has a set of such postpositions, e.g. wɨst' 'inside'; lay 'on'; gar 'with'; at'ɛgɛb 'near', etc. In Amharic, nouns followed by these postpositions usually have at the same time one of the prefixes bɛ- ('in, at, by', or kɛ- 'from'). In some Ethiopian languages, however, (e.g. Galla) the postpositions occur with the noun alone.

G5. "Quoting" clauses. The language has as a frequent construction a clause which seems to be a direct quotation followed by a form of the verb to say (e.g. the gerund 'having said'). Often this clause is actually a direct quotation, which is preferred in the language to indirect quotations, but it may be an expression of intention or appearance or manner, not implying any quotation of actual speech.

addis k'ɛmis	ɨgɛzallɛh^{w}	sɨttɨl	wɛdɛ	suk'u	gɛbbac
new dress	I-will-buy	as-she-says	to	the-shop	she-entered

Saying, "I'll buy a new dress," she went into the shop, i.e. She went into the shop to buy a new dress.

G6. Compound verbs. In addition to many simple verbs consisting of a verb stem with inflectional elements, there are many verbs consisting of a noun-like or interjection-like "preverb" plus a semantically colorless auxiliary, commonly the verb "to say". Example: Amharic has many such compound verbs consisting of a preverb (which usually does not occur in exactly this form apart from the compound verb) plus the verb alɛ 'to say' e.g. k'uc'c' alɛ 'go slow, be careful'. In Amharic all these verbs are intransitive i.e. do not take a direct object, and the corresponding transitive verbs are usually made with adɛrrɛgɛ 'make' e.g. k'uc'c' adɛrrɛgɛ 'to seat (someone)'.

G7. Negative copula. There is a special form, either an independent verb or an unaccented ending which serves as the negative of the verb "to be", but is not formed the way the negatives of verbs are normally formed in the language, either by virtue of having a different stem or by having a different negative marker. Example: Amharic nɛw 'he is': aydɛllɛm 'he is not'. Both have a unique set of forms and they have unrelated stems.

G8. Singular with numbers. Although the language has the morphological category of plural in nouns, the plural form is not normally used with numerals or words indicating quantity. In languages like English, when a numeral other than "one" is used with a noun, the noun must be in the plural, e.g. five houses, but languages with this feature have the equivalent of five houses. Example: Amharic bet 'house': betocc 'houses': ammɨst bet 'five houses' bɨzu bet 'many houses'. Amharic is not a clearcut example since the construction with the plural (ammɨst betocc) is also used quite often, but in many Ethiopian languages the use of the plural form is rare or nonexistent with numbers.[9]

G9. Possessive suffixes. One way of expressing 'my', 'your', 'his', etc., is with a set of pronoun suffixes added to the noun. In some languages this set of endings is identical or nearly identical with the set of pronoun object suffixes added to verbs. Example: Amharic bet 'house': bete 'my house', betɨh 'your house', betu 'his house', etc. In Amharic the possessive suffixes are identical with the object suffixes except in the first and third person singular.

G10. Person-gender pattern. The language has a masculine-feminine distinction in both the second and third person singular of pronouns and verbs. Example: Amharic has the pattern shown in this example of emphatic subject pronoun with copula:

antɛ	nɛh	you (m.s.) are
anci	nɛš	you (f.s.) are
ɨnnantɛ	naccɨh^{w}	you (pl) are
ɨrsu	nɛw	he is
ɨrswa	nat or nɛcc	she is
ɨnnɛrsu	naccɛw	they are

G11. Prefix tense. There is a tense formation which consists of adding a set of subject prefixes to the stem, and in it the 2nd person masculine singular and the 3rd person feminine singular are identical in form, having a t - prefix (Tucker 1967). This prefix tense may also include suffixes marking gender and number; it contrasts with tenses formed by adding subject suffixes to the stem. Example:

Amharic short present	1	ɨsɛbɨr	(that) I break
	2 m.	tɨsɛbɨr	(that) you break
	f.	tɨsɛbri	
	3 m.	yɨsɛbɨr	(that) he breaks
	3 f.	tɨsɛbɨr	(that) she breaks

G12. Root and Pattern. Many of the words in the language can be analyzed as consisting of a consonantal skeleton or root, which carries the basic lexical meaning, and a pattern of vowels which carries the grammatical meaning. Typically a root consists of three consonants. Example: Amharic √sbr 'break' + ɛ-a-i → sɛrak'i 'one who steals' (where √ means "root").

G13. Reduplicated intensives. Reduplication of the first syllable is a regular process of forming intensive verbs (repeated or more intense action) and plural adjectives. Sometimes instead of repeating the first syllable, a syllable is inserted which repeats the second consonant of the stem. Examples: Galla demu 'to go' : deddemu 'to go frequently' : rʊ́kutu 'to hit' : rurrʊ́kutu 'to hit repeatedly'; t'inna 'small': t'it'inna (pl.). Amharic expands the second consonant: sɛbbɛrɛ 'to break' : sɛbabbɛrɛ 'to break things one after another' or 'to smash to pieces'; this formation can be made from most simple verbs. Also, tɨnnɨš 'small' : tɨnɨnnɨs 'small' (pl.); this way of making the plural is used in Amharic with some common adjectives referring to dimensions or colors.

G14. Broken plurals. The language has a plural formation which consists of a change in the pattern rather than the addition of a plural affix. In Semitic linguistics these are called "internal" or "broken" plurals. Example: Tigrinya mɛndɛk 'wall' : mɛnadɨk 'walls'. The language also has plurals made with suffixes (e.g. ħamu 'father-in-law' : ħamutat), but the broken plurals are quite frequent.

G15. Independent and subordinate present. There is a verb tense referring to present and future time which is used only in main clauses and another tense which is used in subordinate clauses. In some languages like Latin or French, there is a subjunctive which is used in many subordinate clauses, but this is also used independently to express commands and wishes. In the languages with a "subordinate present" of the kind meant here, the subordinate tense is not used independently in this way, although sometimes it may have a prefix or suffix added to it for the purpose. The

most striking variety of this independent-subordinate difference consists of a short subordinate form to which some kind of suffix is added to make the independent form. Example: Amharic has a "long" present for main clauses and a "short" present for subordinate clauses. The long form is essentially the short form plus -all-. The two tenses do not correspond exactly in meaning since the "short present" is either required by particular subordinating conjunctions or expresses continuous action as opposed to completed action. For example: long present yisebral (1) 'he breaks, is breaking, will break' : sisebir (si- 'when' + short present yisebir → sisebir) 'when (while) he breaks (broke, is breaking, was breaking)'.

G16. Plural-feminine singular concord. The language has masculine singular, feminine singular, and plural as morphological categories, but a normal construction which frequently occurs is to have a feminine singular adjective, verb, or pronoun referring to a plural noun. Example: In Galla a plural noun subject may have the verb either in the plural or the feminine singular, e.g. gangon demte or demai 'mules she-went', or 'they-went' = 'the mules went'.

G17. Imperative of "come". In place of the expected imperative of the verb "to come", the language has an irregular form, either with a totally different stem ("suppletive stem") or with an exceptional formation. Usually this is the only irregular imperative or one of a small number of irregular imperatives. Example: In Amharic the verb met't'a 'to come', has the imperative form na (f. nɛy, pl. nu) instead of the expected mit'a. This is the only verb which has just an irregular imperative; one other verb (alɛ 'to say' impv. bɛl) has a suppletive imperative but it also uses the second stem in other forms.

G18. Singulative. In some instances the simplest form of a noun is not singular in number but plural or collective, and an affix is added to make a singular. Example: Arabic tuffāḥ 'apples' (in general), tuffāḥa 'one apple'.

The distribution of these grammatical features among Ethiopian languages is shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

It will be noted that the first eight features are quite widely distributed among the Afroasiatic mother tongues and that three of the other ten features (possessive suffixes, reduplicated intensives, and independent-subordinate contrast) are also quite general in the Afroasiatic languages of Ethiopia; the remaining features are somewhat less pervasive. One feature (root and pattern) appears only for the Ethio-Semitic languages, just as the phonological feature of implosive /d'/ was limited to Cushitic and Omotic, but this is slightly misleading, since traces of root-and-pattern structure occur in some of the Cushitic languages (e.g. Afar).

Summary

The set of phonological and grammatical features examined in this chapter may not be the optimal set for the purpose of establishing the Ethiopian language area, and only a limited number of the languages were examined. Quite possibly an improved set of features and the use of all the Ethiopian languages would give a more informative characterization of the area. Even within the limits of the present study, however, it seems clear that the three families of Afroasiatic languages in Ethiopia constitute a very distinctive area among the world's languages.

Footnotes

[1]This chapter benefited from comments by M. L. Bender, R. Hetzron, Hailu Fulass, L. F. Bliese, D. L. Stinson, J. Keefer, E. Moravcsik, and others. Robert Sayre provided most of the Kefa documentation and also checked features in other languages; this contribution was made possible by a grant from the Institute of International Studies of the U.S. Office of Education, HEW Contract No. OEC-0-71-1018 (823). A slightly different version of it appears in the Journal of Ethiopian Studies (Ferguson 1970).

[2]Decisions on the presence and absence of each feature, as well as examples cited, are generally based on the studies listed as Principal Language Data Sources; the Amharic phonetic frequency data are from Sumner 1957 and Bender 1968.

[3]Non-initial /p'/ in Amharic is always geminate in pronunciation; the lack of contrast between /p'/ and /p'p'/ is shown by the use of parentheses in the transcription.

[4]By "lexically distinctive" is meant that the substitution of one sound for the other can make totally different words, apart from any grammatical process. In other words, the sounds are phonemes (see Chapter 1). Thus /f/ and /v/ are lexically distinctive in English because there are pairs of words like fat and vat or waif and wave. The difference between f and v in English is also used in grammatical processes, e.g., a verb ending in v is related to a noun or adjective in f as in grief : grieve, shelf : shelve, safe : save, half : halve, or a singular with f has a plural with v as in leaf : leaves, knife : knives.

[5]The grammatical process of palatalization may often be interpreted as the addition of a y to the consonant; in some cases the palatalization is conditioned by the presence of a front vowel e or i, or may be interpreted as the addition of an s to the consonant.

[6]Speakers of Amharic and foreign observers often differ in their recognition of the affricate value. To many foreign observers the affricate pronunciation seems frequent and in some sense more striking than the glottalization (witness the frequent use of ts and similar transcriptions). The native speaker, even when a trained phonetician, usually does not perceive any affrication and will reject a foreigner's pronunciation which is affricated but not glottalized. For an instrumental study see Sumner 1957 and a note on s' in Bender, 1970.

[7]The feature P4, presence of an implosive /d'/, is limited to the Cushitic and Omotic languages of Ethiopia, no examples occurring among the Ethio-Semitic languages. It is included as an area feature here, however, because of its rarity in the world's languages. As a general principle, if a language has only one implosive consonant it is the labial /b'/; the exceptional cases cited in Greenberg 1966, in which the only implosive is an apical /d'/, are all Eastern Cushitic languages.

[8]See Hetzron 1964 for a full description of the distribution of the Amharic vowel /ɨ/; he presents evidence to show that all occurrences of /ɨ/ are automatic, if in certain instances a fictitious consonant (which is required for other purposes also) is assumed to occur.

[9]The use of the plural ending with numerated nouns in Amharic is also connected with the notion of definiteness. Both ammɨst bet and ammɨst betocc are indefinite, '(some) five houses'. The equivalent of English 'the five houses' must have the plural ending on both the numeral and the noun: ammɨstoccu betocc.

Principal Language Data Sources

Afar - Bliese, 1967; Colby, 1970; Luc, 1967

Amharic - Cohen, 1936; Dawkins, 1969; Ch. 6, this book

Arabic - Bateson, 1967

Anyuak - Keefer, Ch. 10-2, this book

Chaha - Leslau, 1960; Polotsky, 1951

English - Taylor and Bowen, Ch. 11, this book

Galla - Moreno, 1939; Bender and Mulugeta Eteffa, Ch. 9.1, this book

Geez - Bergsträsser, 1928; Mercer, 1961; Praetorius, 1886; Bender, Ch. 7.1, this book

Hadiyya - Plazikowsky-Brauner, 1960, 1961, 1964

Kefa - Reinisch, 1888; Cerulli, 1951

Sidamo - Hudson, 1969; Moreno, 1940

Somali - Abraham, 1962; Armstrong, 1934; Moreno, 1955

Tigre - Leslau, 1945; Palmer, 1962

Tigrinya - Conti Rossini, 1940; Leslau, 1941

Welamo - Moreno, 1938; Ohman, Ch. 10.1, this book.

Phonological Feature		Language														
		Geez	Amharic	Tigrinya	Tigre	Chaha	Afar	Galla	Somali	Sidamo	Hadiyya	Welamo	Kefa	Arabic	Anyuak	English
P_1	/f/ for /p/	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
P_2	palatalization	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+
P_3	glottalic consonants	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
P_4	presence of /d'/	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
P_5	presence of /ħʔ/	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
P_6	gemination	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
P_7	presence of /ʌ ɔ/	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	?	-	-	+
P_8	helping vowel	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	?	?	+	-	-

Table 1: Distribution of Phonological Area Features Among Selected Ethiopian Languages

Notes on Table 1

P_1 Perhaps should be "-" for Chaha since the /p/ which comes from older /bb/ is fairly frequent.

P_7 Perhaps should be "-" for Somali since the extra vowels are front or central rounded vowels.

Grammatical Feature		Language														
		Geez	Amharic	Tigrinya	Tigre	Chaha	Afar	Galla	Somali	Sidamo	Haddiyya	Welamo	Kefa	Arabic	Anyuak	English
G1	SOV order	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
G2	sub. clauses first	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
G3	"gerund"	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-		+	+	+	-	-	-
G4	postpositions	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+?	-	-	-
G5	"quoting" clauses	-?	+	+		+	+	+			+		+	-	-	-
G6	compound verbs	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
G7	negative copula		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-?	+	+	+	+	-
G8	sing. with numerals	-?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
G9	possessive suffixes	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	-
G10	person-gender pattern	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
G11	prefix tense	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
G12	root and pattern	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
G13	redup. intensives		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+		-	-	-
G14	broken plurals	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
G15	indep.-sub. tenses	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-?	+	+	-	-	-
G16	pl.-fem. sg. concord	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+		-	+	-	-
G17	irreg. impv. "come"	-	+	+	+		+	+?	+		-	+	-	+	-	-
G18	singulative		+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+		+	+	-	-

Table 2: Distribution of Grammatical Area Features
Among Selected Ethiopian Languages

Notes on Table 2.

G3 The "gerund" in Tigrinya is also used independently.

G4 Prepositions predominate in Tigrinya, but there are a few postpositions which occur concurrently with prepositions. Also, prepositions predominate in Somali, but several nouns are used in possessive constructions, postposed, meaning "inside, outside," etc.

G6 Geez has only a very few compound verbs with "to say."

G8 Chaha has no regular morphological category of plural in nouns although it does in pronouns and verbs. Arabic requires the singular after certain numerals (e.g. 11-99).

G10 Sidamo has masculine-feminine distinction only in 3 sg. for pronouns and some tenses of the verb; other tenses have the distinction in 1, 2, 3 sg. and 1 pl.

G11 In Somali, verbs are inflected by suffixes except for a few common "irregular" verbs which have the prefix forms.

G14 Somali has broken plurals only in Arabic loanwords. Afar has some broken plurals, although other kinds predominate.

G16 Many nouns switch genders in the plural in Somali and some take singular verb agreement, so that pl. -f. sg. concord is frequent. In Afar most nouns are feminine in the plural and may take singular agreement.

G18 The basic form of the Afar noun is an uninflected "class" form not indicating number. Both singular and plural require affixes in most cases.

References

Abraham, R.C. 1962. The Basis of Somali. In Somali-English Dictionary. London, Univ. Press.

Armstrong, L.E. 1934. The Phonetic Structure of Somali. Berlin: Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen. Repr. 1964 by Gregg Press, Ridgwood, N.J., U.S.A.

Bateson, Mary C. 1967. Arabic Language Handbook. Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C.

Bender, Marvin L. 1968. Appendix B: Phoneme frequencies. In Amharic verb morphology: a generative approach. Unpublished, Ph.D. diss., University of Texas.

_____. 1970. Two Problems in Amharic Phonetics, Journal of Ethiopian Studies, 9/1.

Bergsträsser, G. 1928. Einführing in die Semitischen Sprachen, Max Hueber Verlag, München.

Bliese, Loren F. 1967. Selected problems in noun morphology in the Aussa dialect of Afar, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin (mimeo.).

Cerulli, Enrico. 1951. Studi Etiopici 4, La Lingua Caffina, Istituto per l'Oriente, Rome.

Cohen, M. 1936. Traité de langue amharique. Paris, Institut d'Ethiopie.

Colby, James G. 1970. Notes on the Northern Dialect of the Afar Language, Journal of Ethiopian Studies, 8/1:1-8.

Conti Rossini, C. 1940. Lingua Tigrigna, Rome, Mondadori.

Dawkins, C.H. 1969. The Fundamentals of Amharic. 2nd ed. Addis Ababa, S.I.M. Press.

Emeneau, Murray. 1956. India as a linguistic area. Language 32. 3-16.

Ferguson, Charles A. 1969. The Ethiopian Language Area, Journal of Ethiopian Studies, 8/2:67-80.

Ferguson, Charles A. 1971. Verbs of 'being' in Bengali with a note on Amharic. In J.W.M. Verhaar (ed.), The verb 'to be' and its synonyms, Part 5. Doordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publ. Co.

Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963. Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements. In J.H. Greenberg (ed.), Universals of Language. Cambridge: MIT Press.

_____. 1970. Some generalizations concerning glottalic consonants, especially implosives. Working Papers on Language Universals, No. 2. Stanford University. Also appears in IJAL, 36/2:123-145.

Hetzron, Robert. 1964. La voyelle du sixième ordre en amharique. Journal of African Languages 3:170-90.

Hudson, G. 1969. Towards a Generative Phonology of Sidamo. Addis Ababa, Language Study Group of Ethiopia. Mimeo.

Leslau, W. 1941. Documents Tigrigna. Paris, Soc. de Linguistique.

_____. 1945. Short Grammar of Tigre. New Haven, Amer. Oriental Society.

_____. 1960. Ethiopic Documents: Gurage. New York, Viking Fund.

_____. 1966. Characteristics of the Ethiopic Language Group of Semitic Languages. In A. N. Tucker and M. A. Bryan, Linguistic Analyses. London· International African Institute.

Luc (Frère). 1967. Grammaire 'afar. Randa, Djibouti.

Mercer, Samuel A.B. 1920 (rev. 1961). Ethiopic Grammar with Chestomathy and Glossary. Frederick Ungar, New York.

Moreno, M.M. 1938. Introduzione alla lingua Ometo. Mondadori, Rome.

_____. 1939. Grammatica teorico-pratica della lingua galla. Milan, Mondadori. Repr. 1964 by Gregg Press, England.

_____. 1940. Manuale di Sidamo. Milan, Mondadori.

_____. 1955. Il Somalo della Somalia.

Palmer, F.R. 1957. Gemination in Tigrinya. In Studies in Linguistic Analysis. London, Oxford University Press.

_____. 1958. Comparative statement and Ethiopian Semitic. Transactions of the Philological Society, 119-43.

_____. 1962. The Morphology of the Tigre Noun. London, Oxford Univ. Press.

Plazikowsky-Brauner, H. 1960. Die Hadiya-Sprache, Rassegna di Studi Etiopici 16.

_____. 1961. Texte der Hadiya-Sprache, Rassegna di Studi Etiopici 17.

_____. 1964. Wörterbuch der Hadiya-Sprache, Rassegna di Studi Etiopici 20.

Polotsky, H.J. 1951. Notes on Gurage grammar. Jerusalem, Israel Oriental Society.

_____. 1960. Syntaxe amharique et syntaxe turcque. In Atti del convegno internazionale di studi etiopici. Rome: Acc. Naz. dei Lincei.

Praetorius, F. 1886 (repr. 1955). Aethiopische Grammatik. Frederick Ungar, New York.

Ramanujan, A.K. and Masica, Colin. 1969. Toward a phonological typology of the Indian linguistic area. In T.A. Sebeok et al. (eds.) Current Trends in Linguistics V. The Hague: Mouton.

Reinisch, L. 1888. Die Kafa-Sprache in Nordest Afrika. (3 vols.) Vienna.

Sumner, Claude. 1957. Etude experimentale de l'amharique moderne. 2nd ed. Addis Ababa, University Coll. Press.

Tucker, A.N. 1967. Fringe Cushitic: an experiment in typological comparison. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 30: 655-80.

Waley, A. and Armbruster, C.M. 1934. The verb "to say" as an auxiliary in Africa and China. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 7:573-6.